

*of Forgiveness of Enemies; and
the Excellency of the Christian
Religion.*

N^o 13.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the
U N I V E R S I T Y
O F
O X F O R D:

On Sunday March 13. 1742-3. at St. Peter's.

By JOSEPH EDWARDS, M. A.
of *Magdalene-Hall.*

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The Second Edition corrected, and much
altered and enlarged.

To which is Added,

An APPENDIX, concerning the Ends of
Divine Punishments.

O X F O R D :

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in Cambridge.



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To the REVEREND
Mr. WARBURTON,

The following
D I S C O U R S E,
(In its Present State)

I S

With the Highest Sense of His Singular
Learning and Abilities ;

The Eminent Services he has done to

R E L I G I O N,

NATURAL and REVEALED ;

A N D T H E

Established Church ;

A N D

The **E S T E E M** he professes, and,
I make no Doubt, has,

O F T H E

UNIVERSITIES of this **NATION ;**

Humbly **I N S C R I B E D,**

By His very Great **A D M I R E R,**

And most Respectful **S E R V A N T,**

The A U T H O R.

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MATTHEW V. 44.

But I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.

WHEREAS *Moses* had commanded, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and the Scribes and Pharisees added, and hate thine Enemy ; our Saviour, in Opposition to this abominable Gloss and Perversion of their Founder's Words, requires his Disciples to love their Enemies ; and for their abusive Language, to return them good and soft Words ; and for their Injuries, faithful Services, viz. whenever it lies in their Way to exert these Instances of Kindness towards them. And to promote the more effectual Observation of this Injunction, and that we may be the more secure of Sincerity in discharging of it, he requires us to pray for our Persecutors.

To this excellent Precept, that does so great and distinguishing Honour to our Religion, and its Author, has it happened, as it dayly does to too many others of lesser Importance: Extremely averse to putting it in Practice, Men are apt to take shelter against their own Condemnation of their

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vile Trespasses against it, by confounding the Sense, and enlarging the Extent of it ; and then taking the Advantage which this gives them the Colour of, of supposing it liable to a great Number of Exceptions ; and so making it of hardly any, or no Use or Effect on them. To prevent, therefore, or remove (if it may be) this unhappy Delusion from too many who profess the Faith, and take upon them the holy Name of Christ, I shall,

First, Explain and state the Meaning of this Precept, and apply it to such Cases as I think may create any Difficulty or Mistake.

Secondly, Shew the Grounds on which it stands. And

Thirdly, and *Lastly*, Evince the great Excellency and certain Truth of the Christian Religion from what has been said.

I. As to the First Thing proposed : We are commanded to love, and serve our Enemy : This must be understood in proportion to the Reasons which give him a Right thereto ; and not with that Degree of Warmth and Zeal that is due to others, who stand in all the same Relations to us with him, beside other additional Grounds for our Respect and Readiness to contribute to their Welfare and Happiness. And whoever is equally related to us, not only if he be, in our impartial Judgment, a better Man ; but certainly if he has laid us under particular Obligations to him, and, for ought I know, if he has only not disobliged us, must have a Place in our Affections, and has a Claim to our good Offices in Preference to him.

And

And this, which is so evident, must leave no Man at a Loss for an Answer to an Objection that is sometimes made to the Precept discoursing of, in which it is asked how the given can be the true Interpretation of it, when our Saviour directs us to forgive a Brother that has offended *us if he repents*. What our Saviour enjoins us in my Text is, that we love, and be ready to serve our Enemy; and this, it is true, presupposing, and including the resisting the Temptation his Behaviour towards us is to human Nature to malign and do him ill Offices, is, in one Sense of the Word, *forgiving* him. But beside this, it has another, and much higher Meaning, and expresses a perfect Reconciliation and re-inflating a Person that had forfeited all Claim to any special Affection and Service in the same high Degree of Familiarity, Favour, and Friendship, in which, till he had causelessly dissolved the Bands, we were united with him. Which, were there no other to be given, would be a sufficient Reply to the Objection. And we must be satisfied, that the Remission which is suspended by our Saviour on the injuring Party's Repentance, is the last mentioned, and highest Kind.

But, in Truth, our Saviour is not speaking, in his Instruction referred to in the Objection, of Forgiveness in either of the above Acceptations, but of a particular Sort, as will appear by an Examination of it. In one of the holy *Evangelists* he expresses himself in these Words. *If thy Brother shall trespass against thee seven Times in a Day, and seven Times in a Day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him* *. And more largely in another thus. *If thy Brother shall trespass against thee,*

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* Luke xvii. 4.

thee, go and tell him his Fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the Mouth of two or three Witnesses every Word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee an Heathen Man, and a Publican.* And after some other Words 'tis needless to repeat; St. Peter asking him, *Lord how oft shall my Brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven Times?* he answers, *I say not unto thee until seven Times, but until seventy Times seven †.* It may be that both the sacred Penmen, in these Passages, gives us the same Discourse, each inserting some Parts of it that are omitted by the other. But if we suppose what, I am indeed persuaded, is the real Fact, that they are different Discourses; nevertheless it is plain that they both relate to the same Matter, and speak of the same Forgiveness. And that it is the not prosecuting the Criminal. "Thou must not prosecute him so much as before the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, if by the most likely, and proper Means in thy Power, thou canst produce in him a sincere Repentance without coming to this Extremity.

Indeed it is not only our Duty to punish some Criminals, or Persons guilty of actionable Offences, against us, unless they repent; but also many others whatever Signs they may give of doing it ever so sincerely. A Malefactor may be, and it is too often the Case that he is such a notorious hardened Wretch; or the particular Crime he has committed against me of such a Nature,

* Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17. † Verse 21, 22.

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Nature, and attended with such Circumstances, as may make it imprudent to rely on all the Professions he can possibly make, and all other Expressions of the most sincere Repentance; by nothing but persuading me of which he can hope to escape dreaded Infamy and Punishment. Or where I am clearly satisfied that neither of these is the Case, neither he the Person, nor his Crime of the Nature, and attended with the Circumstances supposed, yet it may be no Secret; or not likely to continue so; and consequently I owe it to my Country, and Self-Preservation to make an Example of him. Accordingly 'tis observable that our Saviour's Discourse proceeds of a Criminal whose Crime was a private one, and of which there was not any Witness; nay moreover such an one, as it seems to me, from the Manner in which Witnesses were to be procured, of the Illegality, if of the Injustice, of which he was not sensible; and that it was neither a heinous actionable Offence, nor he, to Appearance, a hardened, confirmed Villain. He was one with whom the injured Party might, not imprudently, trust himself; and might have some reasonable Hopes to reclaim even by private Admonition and Reproof. I may add, that if his Crime had been a considerable one, and either publick, or likely to become so, it cannot be doubted but that our Saviour's Direction would have been immediately to get him excommunicated, in order to prosecute him before the Civil Powers, which were then, and some Centuries after, only in the Hands of Infidels; both which Steps were plainly necessary for the Defence, the Credit, and Support of the Christian Church, and Cause, as Things, at that Time;

Time, stood. Whereas, we see, 'twas not, till after all other more gentle Methods had been tried, that if, at last, he would not hear the Church, he was to be a Criminal at its Bar, and excommunicated ; and after that looked upon as an Heathen Man, and a Publican, and so prosecuted, or not, before the then Civil Tribunal, as the Nature, Degree, and Circumstances of his Crime, and Reason and Prudence, all Things considered, should determine.

But now surely the Duty of Forgiveness required in my Text, as it has been explained and stated, is most consistent with my applying to the Magistrate, and punishing some Criminals unless they repent, and others absolutely. This Duty requires me, it is true, never to prosecute any Criminal (the only Offender we are now considering) against me, but when his Correction, my own Preservation, and the publick Good, some, or all of these Ends require this at my Hands. But likewise, this Duty obliges me, for the Criminal's own Sake, and as an Instance of my real Good-will and Affection for him, to animadvert upon him, and punish him, whenever my doing so is necessary for, and with a View to his Correction, and Good in this Life, or the next. You'll say the Ends of very many of those Punishments, that, in every larger State, some or other have almost daily Occasion to recur to, seem only to respect the injured Party's Defence and Self-Preservation, and the Safety and Interest of the Community and Mankind ; and that the inflicting these is certainly no Part of the Forgiveness required in my Text. But nevertheless this Duty is most consistent with inflicting them. And we may, and must forgive those

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those very Persons on whom we exercise them. How then is this to be done? We truly forgive these Injurers of us, if, only proposing the mentioned Ends by prosecuting them, we are sorry from a real Affection for *them*, that we are forced to use Severity; and treat them with all possible Humanity, and in such a Manner, as may, as to our Parts, make their Punishment as easy to them as possible; and, at the same Time, the best answer the genuine Ends designed by their Punishment; and be the likeliest, consistent with them, to conduce to their Repentance, and Interest in the next World; and sincerely pray for them.

There may, no doubt, happen very rarely to here, and there, a Man, Instances in which it may be lawful, nay he may owe it to himself (to mention only one particular Case) to his Reputation; which to a generous Nature is the dearest of all worldly Things, and is very often his principal Power and Capacity to provide for himself, and answer the End of his Being and Station with regard to Others; to display in its true Colours, the Revenge, Malice, Envy, and base Detraction of the Wretch or Wretches who stick at nothing, or *have* vilely laboured with incessant and successful Pains, to oppress it, and bury him in Scorn and Infamy. But in this Case I would observe, that it is the easiest Thing in the World for a Man to deceive himself, and while he is so far from having any real Benevolence for his Enemy, and being disposed to serve him in any Thing, and as far as he commendably and prudently may, that he is really actuated by Revenge, colour over this Principle,

Principle with the just Motive of Self-Defence, and the very ingenuous and laudable one of contributing to guard the Character and fair Esteem of many an amiable and excellent Person, by making an Example of one, or more of that Sort of Men whose narrow Minds, and hideous Tempers dispose them to be the Enemies of all of that Stamp. He ought to be very careful that his Judgment be impartial and well grounded of the Necessity of the severe Method he takes to his own Defence; and that he does not prosecute it any farther, or in any greater Degree, than he needs must.

'Tis no Objection to any Part of what hath been advanced, that the Passion of Anger is implanted in us; which it cannot be denied to be. But what is this natural Affection? 'Tis a Sense of Injuries, exciting and impelling us to inflict Smart on the Authors of them. And very wisely has Divine Providence armed us with it. Were we destitute of it, too many of us, for Want of Reflection, of selfish, and a great Variety of much better, and more lovely Tempers, would much too often decline the Expence and Trouble, and disagreeable Task of necessary Prosecutions; and correcting our Children; and so encourage many more, and much greater Outrages on our Persons, our Properties, and Lives; and miserably discharge, certainly, one of the most engaging Trusts reposed in us by God's Providence, and be guilty of the most fatal, and irreparable Injuries of those who are, and ought to be most dear to us. And they are, I am persuaded, the Apprehensions of rousing this Principle, and suffering terrible Consequences

quences of it, that are a greater Check and Restraint on very many aspersing and slanderous Tongues, than any other. And were there no other Use of it than only this, the implanting it in human Nature must be acknowledged a very great Blessing. And therefore any Doctrine which tends to destroy and root it out of our Nature, or does not allow any proper Occasion on which it may be exerted, must not only be false, but ought to be exploded with much Disapprobation of it, as of a very baleful Influence, and pernicious Consequences. But surely no Prejudice of this Sort can be imagined to lie against that of my Text. It is most friendly to this Passion, and highly promotive of the several Ends which Providence designs by it. For then must it needs be right, and of most Use, when 'tis rightly directed and regulated, and circumscribed within its due Bounds. And this is the genuine Effect, and immediate Consequence of this Precept with Regard to it. This Precept does not gainsay but we may have a proper and becoming Feeling, and Sense of Injuries; only it will not suffer us to be provoked by them to any Hatred, or Ill-Will towards the Authors of them: And Resentment, of itself, must never so much as be a Motive to our animadverting on them; nor must we ever, under the Influence of it, do any thing severe, but, exactly, for the Sake of, and in necessary Compliance with the genuine Ends of all human Punishment, and Animadversion.

Let me not be misunderstood, as if I thought Revenge, or Vengeance, in the strict Sense of the Word, that is, Retribution of Demerit, as

the End, and Reason of Punishment, was not taken, by Divine Providence, of certain Men both in this World, and the next. Human Nature, and natural and just Notions of the Divine, together with certain Punishments, clearly and undeniably taught in the Scriptures, are, with me, so many Demonstrations that this is, at least, sometimes the Case. And if some Men will be Objects of this Punishment, this Punishment of them must needs be Matter of Acquiescence and Complacency to all those to whom they, and it are sufficiently ascertained. Nevertheless,

II. The Duty explained is firmly founded both in Reason, and Scripture. Should *we know* that our Enemy was an Object of Revenge, yet the prosecuting and inflicting of it would not belong to *us*. No, Vengeance is God's Prerogative. It is his only, whose Creatures all Men are, who is their Master, and to whom alone they stand, or fall; and who alone has the Wisdom to know their Demerit, and its exact Degree; with perfect Equity and Power to qualify him for giving it, precisely, its Due.

Nay we are not only guilty of horrible Rebellion, and, as it were, wrest God's Prerogative out of his Hand; or, to speak more properly, assume to Ourselves to be God, whenever we presume to inflict Revenge upon any Enemy; but if we so much as censure or judge any one; or are willing (which implies a Sentence) that he should suffer it; for this is directly contrary, if not to Justice, yet, at least, to Goodness, which must needs determine and incline every intelligent Being's Understanding, and Will
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against any one's undergoing Vengeance but the incorrigible and incurable; which who but God alone can discern any Man to be? Or if we should suppose (what seems to me a very great Absurdity) that God may inflict some temporal Calamities on some Men, who have not hardened themselves beyond all Hopes of reclaiming, in Punishment of their Demerit, and not with a View to *their* Good, and as loving Chastisements of *them*; yet we should be as incapable of knowing these, as we are the others. And will we then be so daring, and impious, as ever to judge any one? Hear what the great Apostle of the *Gentiles* saith of Himself: *What have I to do to judge those that are without* *? They that are not within the Pale of the Church, are not Objects of Ecclesiastical Animadversions, and therefore not being a Civil Superior, or Magistrate, and beside Civil and Ecclesiastical Sentences there being no other than those private Judgments discoursing of, an inspired Apostle, and one of the very highest in the Government of the Church, universally disclaims all judging of any but those subject to the Regimen whose End is the saving of Souls. Hear and tremble, nay and abhor yourselves, ye that are uncharitable and revengeful! How can ye be so absurdly, so foolishly wicked and cruel!

The Man you burn with Revenge against may, for what you can pretend to believe to the contrary, be at the Bottom such an one, as that notwithstanding his present Disposition towards you, he may soon quite alter, and, to say all in

one Word, become himself, and your eternal Well-Wisher and Friend.

Our Enemy often is, or, at least, for what we know to the contrary, may be a worthy Man, and of an irreprehensible Conduct and Behaviour, except with Regard to Us in the Instances which make us uneasy. Shall we then be so partial to, such unreasonable Lovers of Ourselves, as, in Spite of all his other good Qualities, and Actions, to hate and malign him for his Misconduct with Regard to Us? If he be such a Man, may let him be what he will, 'tis great Odds but either we have done him some Injury, or else, either thro' his own pitiable Weakness, or unhappy Temper, or the Misrepresentation of others, or our own Indiscretion, he misapprehends us to have done. And must not we be very perverse and foolish to incur the Sin of Revenge against a Man that is our Enemy either by some Fault of ours, or his Mistake, but really loves Us, the Man that we indeed are, or at least the Man that we ought to be? — Or tho' we were sure that it was solely our Merit, and his Want of it that has provoked his horrible Temper to his Treatment of us?

This would be to be an Enemy to Ourselves, and is the only Way for us to suffer any real Harm, which it is not in the Power of the worst Enemy a Man can have to do him. For every spiteful Action that any Man commits against any of us, is one of those Events which the All-ruling Providence intends, and will contribute to our Good and Happiness, in all Probability, in this Life, taking all the Parts of it together, most certainly in it and the next, considered

considered as a Whole, if our Faults, of which one of the greatest that we can be guilty of, is the Sin of Revenge, do not disappoint it.

Shall then such powerful Reasons not enable us to bear down and conquer the strongest Impulses of Passion? Which, however forcible, and domineering it may be, yet is Reason its rightful Lord and Master, and has by Nature the Government, and Power over it. And there is hardly any End of the Considerations that offer themselves to its Assistance. To mention a few more.

We may consider the great Use that may be made of the Provocations an Enemy gives us, to exercise and improve our Patience, in order to its having its *perfect Work*, and that we *may be perfect and intire, wanting nothing* *. — That if we cannot make a Friend of him one Way, we may, very likely, serve ourselves of him another, and make Use of his Malice to discover in Ourselves such Vices and Faults, as, without the Favour and Benefit of it, our Self-Love and Friends would hinder us from so much as suspecting ourselves of. And there is hardly any more obvious Fact, than that he, generally, is the best and most accomplished Person, who hath made much good Use both of many Friends, and many Enemies.

Our Reason is the superior and excellent Part of our Composition. It is that which differences us, at least, in any valuable Respect, from mere Animals. And will we then renounce and discard this noble Prerogative and Distinction of

* James 14.

our Nature? Will we yield Ourselves up to Instinct, to the blind and reasonless Impulses of the Passions, and let that Part of us which is common to us with these Creatures, usurp upon our Reason, and engross more than belongs to it of us? So far as we do this, we brutify Ourselves. And certainly of all the Kinds, the very worst is the wilful Brute.

Nay, but Revenge is not only the most brutish of all the Passions. It is even the Rage and Fury, the Distraction, a principal Ingredient in the Composition of the Fiends of Hell. And worthy is it of possessing the Breasts of the most degenerate and cursed of Beings, whether Angels or Men.

“ The Design of Revenge is a Fury and Torment in our Bosoms. It puts the Spirits into unnatural Fermentations, and Tumults. Whoever meditates it is always restless, his very Soul is stung, swells, and boils, and is in Pain and Anguish, hath no Ease, no Enjoyment of itself so long as this Passion reigns *.”
 From whence it is, that Revenge, if it be perfectly accomplished, seems sweet for a Moment, because it discharges its Perpetrators of those Pests and Destroyers of their Peace and Enjoyment of themselves; only indeed a certain Acquiescence, and some small Pleasure is connected with the obtaining any Passion or Desire. But now surely all this is a poor and sorry Amends, for the long excruciating Pains it puts us to. Besides that it is much abated and destroyed by the odious disgusting Nature of the Action, when

* Tillotson.

'tis committed, and Reflections on it afterwards, attended with those stinging Compunctions, and cutting Remorses which hardly ever, or never are disjoined from them. Or however, that must be a very black and odious Nature, on whom it has not all these Effects.

So that the Man who meditates Revenge is indeed sure to execute it, but it is on Himself. He is frequently forced to renounce Pleasures, and Advantages, and embrace Misfortunes and Unhappineſſes to put himself into a Situation to annoy his Enemy. And is he then sure of compassing his End upon him? When the Arms of Malice and Passion are out, and eager to execute their Wielder's Purposes, and Hostilities commenced, is it certain to which Side Skill, or perhaps the greater Villainy, or Chance may give the Victory? And if he loses it, how cruelly do the Strokes he aimed against his Adversary fall on his own Head? together with the Shame of his Defeat, and one cannot tell how many other Damages. Sure are the Reputations of both to suffer many mortal Stabs; nor may he perhaps ever see the End of giving, and receiving, often with large Interest, Affronts and irreparable Injuries.

Our Reason then we see, besides its own natural Strength and Superiority, may excite, and enforce itself by, many Passions against this irrational Instinct, and animal Passion, Revenge. The Man who never attempts, never designs Revenge, has not only the Honour of preserving so far the Dignity of his Nature, and being truly rational, and human, maugre, perhaps, strong Temptations, and vehement Impulses to
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the contrary.— He is not only happy in the pleasing Reflection of the Excellency and Comfort of such a Conquest over his lower Self, his sensual Appetites ; — and the general Respect and Esteem of Mankind ; all wishing him well, and being ever ready to serve him ; especially if he conducts this Virtue with Discretion ; and the Want of that, we know, tarnishes, and almost annihilates any good Quality whatever. — But very often he subdues even his Adversary himself by his Kindness ; a pleasing, sure, and glorious Conquest ! — and generally the best Friend a Man can have, and the most ready and zealous to serve him on every Occasion, is a reconciled Enemy.

I cannot think I flatter myself when, in Consequence of what hath been said, I am persuaded every one must clearly perceive, that there cannot possibly be the least Ground, or Reason for any Man's revenging himself, but that ever to attempt it, is both exceeding wicked and foolish. And consequently we must love, and be ready to serve our Enemy as explained, and stated under the first Head, if there are any Reasons for doing it, and in complete Proportion to them.

I will briefly lay some of the Principal of these before you.

We had all, both Friends, and Enemies, the same Original ; — all partake of the same common Nature ; — are composed of the same Elements ; — consist of Body and Soul ; — have the same Faculties of both : — Are born after the same Manner ; — continue in the same common State ; — and again return into the same Mass ; — out of which we were taken ; — into the

the Hands of the same common Lord and Creator of us all.

We had all the same Parents ; — were involved in the same original Guilt ; — and the same Ruin : — All too often actually transgress against one another ; — and against our common Lord ; — and are reconciled, and restored to his Favour by the same Saviour and Redeemer. Thus related, and thus like, in all these several Instances, and very many more, is every Man to his Enemy, tho' he should stand in no special Relation to him, as of Fellow-Citizen, Neighbour, Relation, or the like.

Nor can, in all Probability, any of Us ever have any Enemy, but what professes the same holy Name, Christ Jesus, that we do ; and has with us *one Hope of his Calling ; one Lord ; one Faith ; one Baptism* * ; and is united with us under the same Head into one Body ; and *we are every one Members of one another* †. *And whether one Member suffers, all the Members suffer with it, or one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoice with it* **. This is actually the Case in the Natural Body, which shews us our correspondent Duty in the Christian Mystical, and will condemn our Violation of it. These, beside a great Variety of other Reasons, exist in our Enemies, and Ourselves for our loving, and being ready to serve them.

But moreover, he whose Will constitutes our Duty, strictly requires and enjoins that we perform this.

To God is owing all our Love of every Kind : but our Love of Benevolence we cannot pay him any other Way, than by a hearty Zeal to promote

* Eph. iv. 5.

† Rom. xii. 5.

** 1 Cor. xii. 26.

his Honour and Service, and being the Friends of all Mankind, and not only loving those who love us; which is to do no more than Sinners and Publicans do : it is doing nothing for God's Sake.

If any Man, especially any great Man, should have a mighty Respect and Affection for us, and confer upon us some great and lasting Favour; what Monsters should we justly be esteemed, if we were not filled with Gratitude and Love, and overflowed with good Wishes, and needed Services, that it was in our Power, and lay in our Way, to perform to any that are near and dear to him? But the Almighty God, the Creator, Preserver, and Lord and Governor of the World, is the sole (real) Author of all that we are, and have, and ever shall be, and enjoy: To Him are owing our Capacity of Happiness, and all our past and present Blessings, all our future unspeakably, inconceivably great and glorious Hopes and Expectations. And are not all Men, whether they are our Friends, or our Enemies, nearly related to, and extremely beloved by Him? And will we then malign and prosecute, will we not love, and be ready, on Occasion, to serve any of his so dear Children, if he happens to be our Enemy?

Is it not our Honour, and our Duty, and ought to be our great Ambition, Passion, and Pleasure, to be like the Pattern of all Excellency and Perfection, our God? And does not he make *his Sun to rise on the Evil, and on the Good, and send Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust?* i. e. on his Friends, and on his Enemies.

Nay, when we were all his inveterate Enemies, in a State of confirm'd hereditary Rebellion

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against him, continually flying in his Face, insult-
ing and provoking him to the last Degree, even then did he send his Son out of his Bosom to become an infirm Man, God to be a Servant, in Order to suffer the utmost Shame and Misery, and the most ignominious Death, to reconcile us to him, and purchase for us everlasting Glory and Happiness. And shall we not imitate his Goodness? Will we not *love* our *Brethren*, as Christ *both loved us*? If we do not, he will disclaim us, and not so much as acknowledge us to be his Disciples. He has expressly told us; *by this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one for another* *; i. e. the Love just mentioned, and of which he had set them the Example. Nay, "This was one of the last Injunctions he gave, and often repeated to his Disciples in that divine Exhortation he made to them, just before he entred on the bloody Scene of his Passion; 'twas the great Direction he left with them, when he himself was leaving the World†."

Oh! let us then seriously think of these Things! — Let us take Advantage of the present holy Season, wherein we are commemorating his long Fasting, and the great Hardships he certainly underwent, during it, for *Our Sakes*, to impress them more deeply, and lay them up more effectually in our Hearts. Everlastingly undone is every One of us that must stand or fall by the Rigour of unrelenting Justice: And what Title to, what Hopes can he have of Mercy himself, who is not full of it towards others? Is it possible any Man can entertain so much as a Thought, as a Wish, that God will forgive him, i. e. till he is absolutely

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* John xiii. 35.

† *Atterbury.*

incurable, not hate, or intend him any Harm, but love, and inflict nothing on him that is for the present disagreeable, but in Kindness, and for the Sake of his Reformation and Good, and earnestly desire, and contribute all that can, in Reason, be expected, to his repenting, and becoming an Object of actual complete Pardon and Acceptance ; if *he* does not forgive all *his* Enemies, *i. e.* does not judge them, but charitably hope, that even the very worst, and wickedest of them may still not be incorrigible, and Objects of Vengeance ; and accordingly not hate, or injure, but love, and be ready to serve them ? He will, it is most certain, miserably be disappointed, if he doth. God does indeed in the present Life shower down, even on such a Wretch, many Blessings : But all that he hath, or rather seems to have, he shall surely find, at the great and final Day of Accounts, taken from him. It is doing a very great Dishonour to our Saviour and his Merits, not to be fully convinced, and act as if we were thoroughly satisfied, that he will not so prostitute them as to apply them to the covering of our repented of Sins, but upon the necessary Condition that we shew the same Mercy to whosoever offends against us. And what has he not done effectually to impress this great and important, to Ourselves, Truth on our constant Attention and Regard ? He has commanded us constantly, as we pray, to say ; *Forgive us our Debts as we forgive our Debtors* *. *For*, saith he expressly, *if ye forgive Men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases* †.

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* Matt. vi. 12.

† 18, 15.

This Duty not, in the least, infringing our Right of Self-Defence, or human Punishment, but sometimes requiring even this latter, and never laying any other Restraint upon it, than only rightly directing, and assigning its Bounds, by which Means it better, and more effectually answers its Ends, it cannot be pretended to be contrary to the general Good, or Self-Preservation. It is very far from it. Revenge is generally, I had almost said, always, the principal Cause of those Quarrels and Animosities which but too frequently infest, and, in a great Measure, destroy the Peace and Tranquillity of Neighbours, Relations, Acquaintance, Friends; and often draw Consequences after them that are horrible even to relate. How often has this accursed Principle troubled, and laid waste Cities, Countries, and deluged in Blood and unspeakable Calamities, Kingdoms, Nations? It does not send, or preserve Peace on Earth; nor only, by its genuine Effect, make Nation rise against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom, and raise up Famine, Pestilence, and Slaughter, to tyrannize, and make lamentable Havock in all Lands; but makes a Man to be at Variance against his Father, and the Daughter against her Mother; and the Daughter-in-Law against her Mother-in-Law; and how often has it sheathed Cousin's, Brother's, and Father's and Son's Swords in one another's Bowels? The Truth is, the contrary Virtue of Forgiveness of Provocations, and Enemies, is more exercised, and the little (comparatively speaking) Peace and Quier, and good Neighbourhood that there is in the World owes more to it, than, perhaps, on a careless View of Mankind,

Mankind, one might be apt to imagine. Offences do, and cannot but be expected, thro' Ignorance and Inadvertence, and Men's Lusts and Passions, and the frequent interfering of them, to happen almost dayly : but if Mankind were much more forgiving, and a great Part of them came much nearer to a strict Observance of the excellent Precept of my Text than they do, the Face of Things would be altered unspeakably for the better, and we should with much more uninterrupted Satisfaction and Content, enjoy Ourselves and one another, and all the Blessings that are in our Possession, and Power. But if all Men, universally, would be of that divine Temper of which it is the supreme, and loveliest Issue, and completely practise it, we should all be as happy, as the Imperfection and Frailty, and many unavoidable Casualties of the present State will admit of. Then not only every Man's Bosom would almost be an Heaven, but this Earth not very considerably inferior to that delightful, and unmolested, by Pain, or Trouble, or any Uneasiness, of any Kind, Habitation, Paradise, from whence we were driven into it.

I am persuaded this Duty hath been sufficiently explained, proved, enforced, and recommended to your Judgment, and Practice : And there is a sure Foundation laid, whereupon, in the

Third, and last Place, firmly to erect the great Excellency, and certain Truth of the Christian Religion. But there being a famous Objection of the Adversaries of our Faith, and of Themselves, against this Conclusion, I will begin with removing

removing it. They confidently prejudge, and condemn our holy Religion on this very Account, that it pretends to have any peculiar Excellency, and be of any Advantage to its Professors: For, say they, was that the Case, it ought not to have been deferred till more than Four Thousand Years after the Beginning of the World; nor been communicated to so small a Part of Mankind as it has been proposed to since it was first promulged.

As I have put it, this Objection is not indeed pointed against, but I believe it certainly sprung from, and still exists, principally, in Virtue of a certain Mistake, that I shall therefore, previous to directly answering it, prove has not the least Foundation in God's Word; but directly the contrary. It is true, we are there assured, that there is no other Name by which any Man can be saved, but *Jesus Christ*. But then the same infallible Oracle represents him as the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World, a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of all Mankind: And does not condemn all the Heathens that lived before this divine Person, the Captain, and Author of our Salvation, set up his Standard of Christianity, and invited all Nations, and all Men to it, nor any of those Men since, to whose Ears and Understandings this Summons was never sufficiently conveyed, for not obeying, and joining themselves to it. Directly the Reverse. When *St. Paul* had exposed the profound Ignorance in which the *Athenians*, and the Heathen World had lain of the true God, and Religion; he expressly assures them,

them, that *the Times of this Ignorance God had winked at* *. But when the Jews were to be no longer God's peculiar People, but the *Gentiles* were to be associated with them in the same near Relation to him: And when accordingly the Apostles were sent forth to all Parts of the Earth to fetch Men in without Exception, armed with the Power of Miracles to flash Conviction in their Faces, and God's Spirit attending their Preaching and Exhortations, to compel them to accept his Invitation to the Feast of the Lamb, if they refused they were to be slain: All who would not, by this Means, be prevailed upon to repent, and embrace the Faith, were to be destroyed. St. Paul's Words are: *And the Times of this Ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all Men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men in that he hath raised him from the dead* †. Go ye, said our Saviour to his Apostles, and the first Propagators of the Faith, *into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned* ††. That is, all those Men to whom they should preach, and prove, by the several Powers given them, the Gospel, must receive and obey it, or suffer this just Sentence. And, by Parity of Reason, all Men after their Time, to whom it shall be fully, and beyond reasonable Exception, evinced:

* Acts xvii. 30.

† Acts xvii. 30, 31.

†† Matt. xvi, 15, 16.

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That is, as it is almost needless to observe, in both these Cases, generally, and abstracting from such and such Weaknesses of Understanding, and Prejudices, of which, and their Power, God alone is the Judge. In one Word, there is no Passage, throughout the whole New Testament, that, if we will attend to the Context, and the Occasion on which the Words were spoken, or written, and every other necessary Circumstance, so much as seems to contradict that golden Canon uttered by our Saviour; That *to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required* * : which is, in other Words, that of every Man shall be expected in Proportion to his Opportunities and Abilities, all Things, both internal, and external, considered. Heavenly Doctrine ! And blessed Jesu, thou eternal Word, and Reason, worthy of thee ! God, I beseech him, of his infinite Mercy, through thy All-sufficient Merits, pardon whoever have cast the contrary Imputation on thee, and on thy Word and Doctrine ; for surely whether they were of thy Friends, or Enemies, they knew not what they did !

Reason then and Revelation do both give us the fullest Assurance, that Happiness, or Misery, in general, is equally the Lot of all Mankind : I mean that all have it equally in their Power to avoid the one, and obtain the other. What Objection then is it to our Religion, that it is the most perfect, and the best that ever was ? Can a Man pretend to the Character of a free, or impartial, unprejudiced, Thinker, and esteem it any ? I might put this Person on proving, on Principles that we must necessarily allow, that the Advantages this Religion is of to those Ages

* Luke xii. 48.

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and Nations to whom it has been communicated, do not terminate in this Life; and that after this short momentary Duration, which, in Comparison of our next eternal, is as nothing, Men shall not enjoy Stations and Degrees of Happiness, not in Proportion to the Opportunities and Talents entrusted to them, but to the Use they make of what they have received, be it more, or less: And do we see no other temporary Advantages that one Man enjoys above another? Are all Mortals, young, and old, of all Ages, all Climates, and Conditions, and in all Ranks, and Stations, exactly on a Level, equally, at all Times, excellent and fortunate by Nature, and Acquisition, or the Power and Opportunities of obtaining in the same high Degree, not to say the Goods of Fortune and the Body, of the Mind, and all the Virtues of every Kind, if the Christian Religion be not true, and so does not put any Difference between some, and others in this Respect? Is then every Man, or at least might be, if he would, a *Virgil*, or an *Homer*; a *Tully*, or a *Demosthenes*; a *Socrates*, a *Plato*, an *Aristotle*? Does the natural Word, and its prodigiously varied Uniformity, and so, beyond Expression, beautiful and affecting Mechanism? Does the still more complicated, and wonderfully simple, and varied, more striking, more ravishing intellectual, and moral World, equally lie open to the Apprehension, and the Discovery of every individual Man? Are all equal Masters of themselves, and other Men, by their Reason, by their Eloquence? Is all God's rational Creation equally beautiful, and pleasing, without any Shades? Are there no Foils to set off, and heighten the more graceful Parts? Is Mankind a strange Monster without a Body,

Body, or any Member except a Head? And which in the very first Period, and Instant of its Existence was full grown and perfect? This, surely, is strange Doctrine!

I allow our Adversaries that there not only is, but always will be great Differences among Men, and that the Advantages with Respect to Religion, and Virtue, conferred on some beyond others in the present State, will produce correspondent Fruits in the next. Will this, at all, help their Objection? If it could not be answered any other Way, the very Stones would cry out against it, and the whole inanimate Creation loudly, with one Voice, pronounce its Shame, and Condemnation. What hast thou, O Man, that thou hast not received? And who made thee to differ from Us? Why, all Creatures, once, were in the same State, all alike Nothing: and not contented with thy own Lot, or that of the meanest of thy Brethren, to whom not only the solid Globe of the Earth ye tread upon, affords a stable Support, and furnishes all Necessaries, and so many Conveniences and Delights; and the bright Luminaries of Heaven give Light, and conduce to, and supply so many other Blessings; but also for whose Sake so many other Sorts of Animals were made, and are your Servants; and Heaven itself, and God's Arms are open to receive you; dost thou abuse those noble Powers, with which he has peculiarly blessed thy Species, of Reason, and Speech, to argue against, and reproach his Providence, that he has distinguished some of you from others by his gracious Gospel? And wilt thou deny that he has conferred this Favour on some Men, if he has not on all?

Pursue this Argument as far as it will go, and necessarily leads. That is, deny that there are any such Creatures as Angels, or pure unbodied Spirits, unless not only You, but unless every Shrub, every Grain of Sand, and earthly Particle be of that Kind ; nay unless God has exhausted his creative Power, and in the very first Instant, we might say, from all Eternity, produced as many the most excellent Creatures that can possibly be, as he has the Physical Power of making Beings at all.

I should think this Objection should put you in Mind of an Observation that *Tully*, as I remember it is, has somewhere made, That there is nothing so absurd, but some or other Philosopher has asserted it. For, surely, what provoked this learned, and knowing Man to this Expression could not, one would think, be near so absurd as this wild Position, that God could not give some Men, in Point of Virtue and Happiness, vastly the Advantage both here, and hereafter, over others. Is there not great Reason to think that a Taste for, and Desire of Variety is a fixed natural Affection in all intelligent Beings, by many Sorts of whom, superior to the human, we are constantly beheld ? But how miserably would it be disappointed, how disgusted, was there that undiversified Sameness in Men, either in this World, or the next, which is contended for in the Objection ? No, be assured, that in God's House there are many Mansions ; and that our Race will constantly not only be distributed into every possible Rank down, through the whole Species, from the next Degree to Angels, to the very Verge of the Sort of Beings immediately below us ; but that also every one
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of these Orders will be filled with all the Variety it can admit of.

And as we are first Infants, and through the several intermediate States, Men ; so did we arrive by several Degrees or Ages, at this manly, and perfect Religion, the Christian. And by a like beautiful Analogy to the Constitution and Course of Nature, the Shadow of the Law made its Appearance before, gave Notice of, and ushered in the Substance of the Gospel. And in like Manner the Law was a School-master to train Men up to this finished, and perfect State.

Pride, I know, and Envy, or the like, may make a Man guilty of repining at the Superiority of many other Men to himself, in the present State, as it would at that of nobler Beings, were he as conversant with them ; the very highest of which are like, or of the same Nature with him, in many Respects, tho' they differ from him in others ; as is the Case of some Men with regard to other Men. Nay even that Root and Principle of all Virtue, that which contains, and is indeed it ; for every particular Instance of Virtue, is but the right Application of the Love of our Brethren (*viz.* for God's Sake) to the occurring Occasion ; Benevolence, through a Want of attending to the Impression of Variety in our Nature, and through Ignorance of many other Matters, or the like, may sometimes inspire the best of Men with a Wish, and fervent Desire, that Providence had more amply provided for some Men and Nations than Experience seems to inform us it hath. But in Heaven, where no perverse, or oblique Thing can be, and all Ignorance, and Error will be done away, the Case will be vastly altered. There we shall find our
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rightly disposed Minds and Affections, and the State of Things ever perfectly to accord. All will be, and appear right, and gratify us the best, and be the most entertaining and delightful to us that can possibly either be, or be conceived : I mean not only that we shall be the best pleased that we possibly could, as with every Thing else, so with that very Subordination there will be of one Class of Beings to others ; but we shall also perfectly acquiesce, with the most intire Complacency, in our own State, and Rank, and all its Circumstances. And while every Person's Mind and Understanding is rightly, and sufficiently informed and enlightened, his Desires and Affections will, if I may so express myself, be exactly set to the Divine Will. He will love all his Brethren of every Kind, as himself, desiring only, as for them, so for himself, and being perfectly content with, that very Degree of Bliss that is assigned by God to each. Thus every Being that is so wise and happy as to gain a Possession in Heaven, will enjoy the Lot of all the Blessed in Measures exactly proportioned to his Capacities and Desires. And as these increase and enlarge, as, 'tis most probable, they constantly will, each Class of Men, as well as every other Sort of Beings, will ever be rising, and taking the Places of the next Superior. Oh eternal God, what *Things* hast thou prepared for those that love thee ! Things that neither *Eye* hath seen ; nor *Ear* heard, nor hath it entered into *Heart* to conceive ; such Things as *pass* Man's Understanding ! And of thy Goodness there is no End.

Can there then be that Man that can think it unreasonable, nay must not every Man be firmly persuaded

persuaded, that God's last Dispensation, the Christian, would be the most excellent, and of the greatest Advantage to its Professors of any that ever was? It certainly is, in particular, with Regard to the Duty that has been discoursed of. Not but that it, beyond doubt, is a Part of natural Religion. I have evinced, under my last Head, that it is firmly fixed in the Nature of Things, and Principles of natural Reason, as well as revealed. But is it not notorious how contrary it was both to the general Practice, and Professions of the Heathen World? Nay that even the acutest, and purest Moralists and Philosophers among them, at least before the Light and Influence that was reflected on them from the Christian World, never once completely discovered it so much as in Speculation? I will give you one of the Passages a late celebrated Author, and Patron of the contrary Opinion has alledged * in Maintenance, and, as he seems to apprehend, full Proof of it. It is taken from *Plato*, who thus expresses himself, in this Author's Translation. "It is right to have Mercy and Compassion on him that is curable, that you should curb your Anger, and not carry any Thing in a womanish Manner obstinately to Extremity: but if a Person be wicked and obstinate, intemperate and incurable, then indeed is Anger to be permitted towards him; for this Reason we say that a good Man ought always to be ready to forgive, as well as to be angry." I think I may safely affirm, that the divine and meek *Plato* does, in these Words, with much Precision and Accuracy,

* Dr. Sykes's Prin. and Connex. of Nat. and Rev. Religion, p. 420.

assign the utmost Extent that the best Heathens, before our Saviour's Time, did, or could be expected, on the Principles held by them, to assign to the Duty of Forgiveness. And yet it is immediately obvious, on a Comparison of what he lays down with the true Idea of it, stated and proved above both from Reason and Revelation, that in certain Instances he directly allows of Revenge. Indeed he erects the Duty of Forgiveness on its true Foundation ; making Mercy and Compassion to be due to whoever is not incurable. But then he allows that Man, and the injured Party, may sometimes judge his Enemy to be so ; which he never can do without a horrid Breach of the Christian, and Moral Duty of Charity. And that having passed Sentence on him, as an incorrigible Wretch, he may inflict Revenge on him ; Revenge, not in the more loose Sense of the Word, wherein it barely signifies Punishment ; but strictly speaking, in the Notion of Vengeance, and as retributing Demerit.

Blessed be God, who has hid these Things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto Babes. I say *revealed* them. For can any Man in his Senses think that these illiterate Mechanicks, and simple Men, our Saviour and his Apostles, by the natural Light of their own Understanding, discovered so nice a Point, so very exactly, that all the Wit and Penetration of ancient *Greece* and *Rome* failed to discern ? No. 'Twas only the Divinity within them could sufficiently enlighten their Minds, and dispel those dark and confounding Mists, in which as *rude* Persons, and as *Jews* they were miserably involved. Had they only truly stated, and ascertained this one Duty to those who heard them preach,

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or read their Writings with Attention, it might truly have been said, that *the People which sat in Darkneſs ſaw great Light, and to them which ſat in the Region and Shadow of Death Light is ſprung up* *. But this is but little in Compariſon of what we owe to them even with Regard to this ſingle Precept. I will not now enter into a thorny Diſpute, whether the Forgiveneſs to be exerciſed on Goſpel-Principles, which is required of all Chriſtians, be a different Duty from the merely moral Obligation, whoſe Matter is the ſame. Admitting that it is not; there can be nothing more plain and undeniable, than that the natural Tendency of theſe Principles is not only to make us more ſurely, and fully to perform this Duty; but alſo greatly to exalt, and purify both our Nature, and it. And is not then Chriſtianity, beyond Queſtion, true? Suppoſing only that we could diſcern nothing in it evidently and certainly contrary to Reaſon; it would even then be founded, as on a Rock, in its external Evidences, Prophecies, and Miracles. But the Principles of Chriſtianity give the laſt Finiſhing to the Excellency and Perfection both of our Duty, and our Nature in its preſent State. Whoever, by God's Grace, will thoroughly conſider, receive, and digeſt them, will be as pure and exalted, as it is poſſible for ſuch a Being as he is in other Reſpects, to be. And ſuch Principles as theſe, ſuch a Religion as this, Mankind was ſure, one Day, to have. Such a Religion as the Chriſtian God was ſure, in the Fulneſs of Time, to give. We could not therefore reaſonably doubt, but that our holy Religion is from God, and true, tho' the Prophecies,

* Matt, iv, 16.

and Miracles, in Virtue of which it claims Men's impartial Attention, and Assent, had been conveyed with much less Certainty to us, than they are.

Let us then shew our Faith by our Practice. Let us have, and express a due, and necessary Sense of the great Favour and Honour God has done us by calling us to the Profession of Christianity, that delightful and happy Feast, of which there will be no End, to which so many others are uninvited, by being Christians indeed ; by a faithful, and most ardent Obedience to all his Commands, both Moral, and Christian ; especially that which our Redeemer has made the very Characteristic of *our* belonging to him, and pressed again, and again, upon us, almost with his last Breath ; and in Imitation of his dying for us, and saving us from the Death and Misery our Enmity to, and Rebellion against him would else have drawn upon us. Then will he, when he appears in his Glory, not be ashamed of us, but take especial Notice of us, and do us especial Honour, and we shall sit down and feast with *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, in his Kingdom, and eternally bless the Day that gave us the Opportunity to become his Disciples. Otherwise we shall never cease to lament, and deplore Ourselves, and this great Blessing which we shall have so abused and perverted into the saddest Curse upon us. And shall with everlasting Horror and Infamy, in the Midst of distinguished Punishment, and Pains, wish that neither Christ, nor Ourselves had ever been born.

APPENDIX

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Page 15. l. 26. *after* her Mother *for* a ; *put* a

APPENDIX.

JUST before I enter on the second Head of the preceding Discourse, I lay down, that, on several Accounts, I cannot but be convinced that Retribution of Demerit is the End and Reason of many divine Punishments both in this Life, and the next. I did not prove this Position, or rather Concession; because it was needless; my Arguments, which I enter upon immediately after, evincing the Obligation we lie under to Forgiveness of all our Enemies without Exception, *notwithstanding* the Truth of what I admit, or allow. And there is no qualified Reader can fail to discern that my Conclusion holds *a fortiori*, that Concession being supposed not to be necessary, nor just.

However, on second Thoughts, for Reasons not necessary to trouble the Reader with, I have judged it not amiss to refer him to a sufficient Proof of it; which he may find in *Grotius, de J. B. & P. L. II. C. xx. S. 4. No. 2.*

Indeed it is hardly conceivable how any Person, unless by confounding the Almighty, All-Wise Being, with that dependent, weak, and foolish Creature, Man, and making the sole Ends of all *human* Punishments to be the *only* ones of all Punishments whatever, and so of the divine; can fail to perceive, that incorrigible Sinners are punished by God *because they deserve it.* A Man must be ignorant both of the Power of God, and of the Scriptures, who can imagine that God punishes such and such Persons *only* * that he may (truly) denounce

* Tho' the next and immediate Reason of all divine Punishments, except his loving Chastisements, be *Vengeance*; they and God's denouncing them have certainly another End. The Sanctions of Law (saith an excellent Author) are to be

denounce Misery against Wickedness, in order to keep the World in Obedience. Is this agreeable to our Notion of God's infinite Power, and the Expressions of his Word, when it declares the Punishment of the wicked? Does it not always speak of it, as a Thing *meet for them*, and of *them as worthy* of it, without the least Intimation, or implying that it is *only* an Instrument or Expedient of good Government, and a Means to Obedience? The Purity and Holiness of God detests and abhors all impenitently wicked Beings; and they must undergo their deserved Debt, and Justice. In the Words of Bishop Burnet: "A Goodness towards Persons not capable of becoming good, is a Goodness that does not agree (he does not say with *only* God's Wisdom as Governor of the World, but) "with the infinite Purity and Holiness of God †." But if Men are not punished *only* for the Sake of general Obedience, and the general Good, but their Wickedness exceeds God's Goodness, and deservedly draws down his Punishment on them; they suffer *Vengeance*. This is Doctrine which (as I could easily shew) Reason points out to all, that will turn their Eyes and Attention, at all that Way, and inculcates by a great Variety of irresistible Proofs; as well as it is Scripture Doctrine. And, what must highly recommend it to every prudent Christian, it is *OLD* Christian Divinity; and not the Spawn of *Socinian*, or *Deist's* Objections, begotten on I will not say what Principles and Causes in some of their Answerers.

be considered under the Notion of Means, the End of which must be Obedience to the Law, Dr. Conybeare's *Def. of Rev. C. 11.*

† Exposition of 39 Articles, p. 29.

F I N I S.